

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TAGS: PFOR, BG, SU
SUBJECT: FIRYUBIN VISITS BANGLADESH

1. SUMMARY: SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER FIRYUBIN
VISITED BANGLADESH DECEMBER 23-26 AND HELD
DISCUSSIONS WITH BDG LEADERSHIP. AT CONCLUSION OF VISIT BDG AND
USSR STATED AGREEMENT ON PRINCIPLE OF PEACE IN SUBCONTINENT AND
NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES AMONG
SOUTH ASIAN POWERS. EDITORIAL REACTION SO
FAR HAS BEEN CAUTIOUSLY NEGATIVE TO VISIT, CENTERING
ON PRESUMED LACK OF SOVIET SUPPORT IN DISPUTES WITH
INDIA. ONE MFA SOURCE EXPRESSED HIS OPINION THAT SOVIET
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE WOULD ACCELERATE FROM NEAR STANDSTILL
SINCE DEPOSITION OF MUJIB. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY ANY CONCRETE
POLITICAL ADVANTAGE WILL ACCRUE TO BANGLADESH OR THAT MILITARY
SHIPMENTS WILL RESUME IN ANY SIGNIFICANT QUANTITY. ABOUT
SAME TIME SOVIET "CULTURAL" DELEGATION WAS ALSO HERE. END
SUMMARY.

2. SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER NICOLAI FIRYUBIN
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ARRIVED IN DACCA DECEMBER 23 ACCCOMPANIED BY SEVERAL
OFFICIALS OF FOREIGN MINISTRY. FORMAL DISCUSSIONS WERE
HELD WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN, BUT DURING
VISIT FIRYUBIN MET SEPARATELY WITH PRESIDENT SAYEM, CHIEF
MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL ZIAUR RAHMAN, AND BOTH
DEPUTY CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATORS. HE PAID A VISIT

TO A JUTE MILL AND SPOKE IN RESPONSE TO A TOAST AT A DINNER
GIVEN BY HUSAIN, AND AGAIN AT ONE GIVEN BY DCMLA AIR VICE
MARSHAL MAHMUD.

3. AT HUSAIN DINNER DECEMBER 24 FIRYUBIN POINTEDLY REMINDED
BANGLADESHIS OF SOVIET ASSISTANCE IN LIBERATION WAR OF 1971.
BY IMPLICATION THIS SERVED AS A REMINDER THAT UNDER MUJIB
SOVIET-BANGLADESHI RELATIONS HAD BEEN CLOSE AND THAT THERE
HAD BEEN REWARDS FROM THE SOVIET UNION IN THE FORM OF ECONOMIC
AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND POLITICAL SUPPORT. FIRYUBIN
WENT ON TO MENTION THE SUPPORT GIVEN TO BANGLADESH'S LONG
DELAYED APPLICATION FOR UN MEMBERSHIP.

4. HUSAIN IN HIS REMARKS STATED THAT BANGLADESH "ATTACHES
GREAT IMPORTANCE" TO ITS RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND
THAT THE COUNTRY'S POLICY WAS FRIENDSHIP WITH ALL NATIONS,
LARGE OR SMALL "ON THE BASIS OF MUTUAL RESPECT FOR EQUALITY
AND SOVEREIGNTY". WHETHER THIS WAS A MEANS TO CONVEY BANGLA-
DESHI ANNOYANCE AT PAST AND POSSIBLE PRESENT SOVIET
INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS HERE IS NOT CLEAR.

5. THE FINAL STATEMENT ON THE MEETINGS EXPRESSED THE
INTEREST OF BOTH NATIONS IN PEACE IN THE SUBCONTINENT AND
IN THE SETTLEMENT OF ALL INTRA-REGIONAL DISPUTES THROUGH
NEGOTIATIONS. THE STATEMENT SAID
ALSO THAT SUCH ISSUES
AS THE MIDDLE EAST, DETENTE, DISARMAMENT AND THE INDIAN
OCEAN WERE DISCUSSED.

6. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT IF BANGLADESH HAD ANY HOPE FOR
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SOVIET SUPPORT ON FARAKKA OR FOR THE RESUMPTION OF MILITARY
DELIVERIES IT WAS UNSUCCESSFUL. ON THE OTHER HAND, AN
MFA OFFICIAL TOLD ECON COUNSELOR THAT HE THOUGHT THE SOVIETS
WOULD STEP UP DELIVERIES OF PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE ALTHOUGH APPARENTLY NO NEW AGREEMENTS WERE MADE.

7. SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE EDITORIAL REACTION. THE
INDEPENDENT (AND SELF-PROCLAIMED "PRO-DEMOCRATIC") ITTEFAG
SAID DECEMBER 27 THAT IF THE SOVIETS WANTED TO DO SOMETHING
FOR BANGLADESH THEY COULD SUPPORT "US ON SUCH LIFE AND
DEATH QUESTIONS AS FARAKKA". LEFTIST, BUT LEANING
TOWARD PEKING, WEEKLY HOLIDAY, SUGGESTED THAT THE USSR IS
BECOMING DISENCHANTED WITH INDIA (CITING, INTER ALIA,
"RIGHTIST" ECONOMIC POLICIES, ATTACKS ON THE CPI AND
"RAPPROCHEMENT" WITH CHINA AND PAKISTAN) AND MAY BE HOPING
FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH AS A COUNTER TO THIS.
EDITORIAL CLOSED WITH STATEMENT "BANGLADESH NEVER DID NOR
WILL TOLERATE OVERLORDSHIP OF ANY COUNTRY."

8. ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH FIRYUBIN VISIT, TWO
MAN "CULTURAL" DELEGATION LED BY PROFESSOR YURI GAN-
KOVSKY VISITED DACCA AND HOBNOBBED WITH ACADEMICS AND
HANGERS-ON OF BANGLADESH-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY.
GANKOVSKY, WHO SPEAKS ENGLISH MODERATELY WELL, HAS WRITTEN
ON PAKISTAN, AND HAS SOME REPUTATION IN WESTERN AS WELL AS
SUB-CONTINENTAL SCHOLARLY CIRCLES.

9. DURING VISITS USSR EMBASSY ANNOUNCED SOVIET FILM
WEEKS SCHEDULED FOR DACCA AND CHITTAGONG.

10. TWO VISITS AND FILM WEEKS ARE HIGHEST LEVEL OF
PUBLIC ACTIVITY BY SOVIETS IN BANGLADESH IN A LONG TIME.
NONETHELESS, WE SEE LITTLE IMMEDIATE GAIN FOR SOVIETS WHO
REPUTATION IS STILL CLOUDED BY RELATIONS WITH MUJIB REGIME
AND CONTINUED TREATY RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA WHICH
BANGLADESHIS BELIEVE COULD BE USED AGAINST THEM.

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